



SDMS Doc ID 2014594

2014594



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEC - 2 2002

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senator
201 North "E" Street, Suite 210
San Bernardino, CA 92401

Dear Senator Boxer:

Thank you for your letter of October 17, 2002, concerning the plume of perchlorate contamination that is affecting public water supply wells in Rialto and Colton in western San Bernardino County. I share your concern that the water supply remain sufficient to meet the needs of the affected communities, and assure you that the perchlorate contamination problem is receiving the immediate attention of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The four drinking water agencies in the area have discovered perchlorate in 22 wells. The measured concentration of perchlorate in these wells exceeds the State of California action level of 4 parts per billion. Although the initial response of removing most of these wells from active service will be effective during low-demand seasons of the winter and spring, the loss of these wells may create a water supply shortage by the summer of 2003. The Regional Administrator, Wayne Nastri, is personally working with his counterparts at the California Environmental Protection Agency, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to determine whether State and local actions will adequately ensure a sufficient quantity of clean water in western San Bernardino County. The group is working not only to devise short-term solutions to immediately protect public health, but also to identify potentially responsible parties for the contamination and determine what steps need to be taken in the longer term to address the perchlorate plume. To date, the following actions have been taken:

- EPA, the four affected water agencies and the State are analyzing the water agencies' immediate water supply needs and possible solutions to the anticipated water shortage. EPA is also working with the State of California to identify immediate funds that may be available from any potentially responsible party (PRP) and the State to pay for water treatment to remove perchlorate.
- EPA is working with the State to identify and document the liability of any PRPs that may have contributed to the perchlorate contamination. EPA is taking the lead to investigate formerly used defense sites in the drinking water source area.

- The Regional Water Quality Control Board has issued investigation orders to eight current or former facilities in the area including the U.S. Department of Defense; a former rocket research and manufacturing operation; a manufacturer of military flares and pyrotechnics; two fireworks manufacturers; a county landfill; and two chemical and explosives recyclers. These orders encourage the facilities to explore water supply replacement options for the contaminated water systems.
- EPA is evaluating whether the Denova Environmental facility in Rialto, California is a contributor to the perchlorate contamination. EPA has been using emergency response authority to stabilize an extremely hazardous situation at this site. Since June 2002, we have destroyed and removed many tons of highly volatile stored explosives and hazardous wastes, much of which appear to have originated from military sources.
- Researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey are assisting EPA with evaluating the groundwater flow in the area, so a long-term solution to the problem can be carefully designed to address the full extent of the contamination and protect the uncontaminated portions of the aquifer.

Again, thank you for sharing your concerns. I assure you that the Agency will continue to work closely with the State and local agencies to address the plume of perchlorate that is affecting the public water supply in Rialto and Colton in western San Bernardino County. Please contact me or the Regional Administrator, Wayne Natri, if you have any additional questions or concerns, or your staff may contact Betsy Henry in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-7222.

Sincerely yours,



Christine Todd Whitman